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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT LOUIS 000014

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ABLD](#) [KREC](#) [ZI](#) [MP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE CALL ON MAURITIAN PRIME
MINISTER RAMGOOLAM

Classified By: Ambassador Cesar B. Cabrera for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

11. (C) Summary: On January 12, Ambassador Cabrera (with DCM as note taker) conducted his final official meeting with Mauritian Prime Minister Ramgoolam. The 90-minute meeting reinforced the close US-Mauritian ties, and provided Ramgoolam an opportunity to thank the Ambassador for his service to both nations. Rapport between the Prime Minister and the Ambassador was excellent, with much of the meeting engaged in friendly discussions and anecdotes about political life in Mauritius and the United States. A highlight of the meeting was Ramgoolam noting that he has reconsidered his government's position on Zimbabwe, and that his focus during upcoming meetings in Washington (on the margins of the prayer breakfast in early February) will be to ask for U.S. guidance on how Mauritius can be more helpful in international fora, particularly within SADC. Other issues discussed included military/police cooperation and programs, trade relations, and the new U.S. administration. Not surprisingly, Ramgoolam noted his government's continued desire for dialogue with the U.S. on Diego Garcia. End Summary.

ZIMBABWE

12. (C) During Ambassador Cabrera's departure courtesy call with Prime Minister Ramgoolam (PM) on January 12, the PM noted his growing disappointment with the situation in Zimbabwe. The PM recounted a recent conversation he had with the British Foreign Minister in which Ramgoolam noted that the situation in Zimbabwe had changed. "Any government that can refuse President Carter a visa is clearly not functioning," he said. According to the PM, it was a poor decision and reflected how bad things have become politically. He sees now that Mauritius should review with its allies, "especially the United States, how Mauritius might best use its influence in Africa, especially in SADC." Ambassador Cabrera welcomed this new view, noting that Mauritius was in an excellent position to display leadership on the Zimbabwe issue. He encouraged the PM to follow up this new sentiment with action. Ramgoolam was thoughtful to the appeal, and agreed that such a topic should be one of a handful of issues he would like to raise during his planned early-February trip to the U.S. for the annual prayer breakfast. (Embassy comment: Meetings with senior U.S. leaders have been requested via the Mauritian Embassy in Washington.)

PLANNED TRIP TO THE US

13. (C) Ramgoolam then moved to his priorities for his

upcoming trip to the United States, which is tentatively set for 4-6 February. In addition to the prayer breakfast, the PM hopes to meet with newly inaugurated President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, the Agriculture Secretary, the US Trade Representative, and a number of members of Congress. His talking points would focus on seeking to strengthen relations between our two countries. More specifically, he would wish to discuss the further advancement of trade agreements, including securing a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and progressing on Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) goals, as well as continued regional cooperation programs. Of course, he said, he would like to raise Mauritian concerns about Diego Garcia and the Chagos archipelago, noting that he believes he has a "solution which would be good for the UK and the U.S." The Ambassador demurred on the last point, and simply reminded the PM that issues regarding Diego Garcia should be raised with the UK.

DIEGO GARCIA

¶4. (C) The PM brushed the Ambassador's comment aside, noting that he believes talks are going well with the British on the issue of Diego Garcia. As evidence, he cited meetings taking place that same day in London among key technical staff of both countries. Given that the PM is well aware of the U.S. stance on this issue, the Ambassador turned the conversation to the issue of peacekeeping.

PEACEKEEPING

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¶5. (C) The Ambassador brought the discussion back to leadership issues, noting that Mauritius was sadly at the bottom of the list of African countries contributing to international peacekeeping efforts. The PM acknowledged the past few discussions he has had with the Embassy on this topic and said that at Post encouragement he held a private meeting with his police chief (there is no military in Mauritius) and the head of the Special Mobile Force (SMF) (Note: This is the unit from which Mauritian peacekeepers would most likely come). Suspecting that reluctance for contributing to PKOs stemmed from the SMF, the PM was surprised during his discussions to hear how enthusiastic SMF leadership was for volunteering for missions. "I don't see where there is any resistance" to the increase of peacekeepers from Mauritius, said the PM.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The Prime Minister's comments on Zimbabwe were a bit of a surprise. Despite repeated demarches over the past year, heretofore Ramgoolam has stuck to a rigid posture of complete support for Mbeki and his negotiations. Even as Mbeki was losing credibility among other AU leaders, Ramgoolam stuck to his repeated refrains. This is the first time he acknowledged Mbeki's failure to obtain a compromise or resolution, although some comments he made in parliament a month ago gave indications that the PM was shifting. Should the PM have meetings in Washington in February, encouragement by the new Administration of Mauritian engagement would be helpful and timely.

¶7. (C) It is likely unavoidable that the PM would use the opportunity of such meetings to raise Diego Garcia, and more expressly the Mauritian desire to cut a deal with the U.S. If for no other than political reasons -- especially with elections coming no later than 2010 -- Ramgoolam would need to return from a visit in the U.S. saying that he discussed Chagos with the new U.S. administration. With regard to peace

keeping, Post has long pressured the GOM to make appropriate commitments. We remain hopeful we can turn the Mauritian policy-makers around to greater contributions.

CABRERA